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EUROPE

J.F.K.: The Murder & the Myths

The most myth-filled aftermath of John F. Kennedy's assassination is the stubborn refusal of many Europeans to accept the belief that the U.S. President could have been killed by a lunatic loner. Headline after headline and book after book roll off the presses with a bewildering array of theories suggesting a deep, dark plot.

Loudest skeptics are Europe's leftists, who will not be dissuaded from their original conviction that Marxist Lee Harvey Oswald was the unwitting tool or the scapegoat of some well-oiled, darker rightist conspiracy, and then was silenced by Jack Ruby. This impression was fed by the bad assumptions made by many reporters and commentators in the first minutes after the assassination in conservative Dallas; and it has never been fully erased. "The American press," declared Italy's left-wing magazine *Vie Nuove* in a recent issue, "has forgotten its glorious tradition of truth and democracy, playing along with the FBI and Dallas police to incriminate Oswald . . . who has no chance to defend himself." In Brit-

ain, that sometime philosopher, Bertrand Russell, has already set up a "Who Killed Kennedy?" committee to look into the situation.

Mr. X? The doubters abroad find ammunition in the arguments of two like-minded Americans. One is Baltimore-born Thomas G. Buchanan, 44, a onetime reporter fired by the Washington Star in 1948 after he admitted membership in the Communist Party. He now lives in Paris and is the author of a widely discussed tome, *Who Killed Kennedy?* Buchanan suggests 1) "that the author of this crime is a millionaire of Texas, called Mr. X"; 2) that Oswald was an accomplice; but 3) that the shooting was done not by Oswald but by two triggermen, one from the Texas School Book Depository building and one stationed on an overpass ahead. Buchanan's book is being published in eight European countries, already is a bestseller.

Rivalling Buchanan for attention is Oswald's posthumous defender, windmill-tilting Manhattan Attorney Mark

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Lane, who has been stumping the Continent with denials that Oswald was the assassin. Both Buchanan and Lane have received smash play in the Eastern European press, whose line has always been that Kennedy was the victim of a three-way conspiracy among Southern racists, Pentagon generals, and the nasty CIA. Two months ago, Lane, addressing the Communist-front International Association of Democratic Jurists in Budapest, declared that the killer or killers, whom he has described as "motivated by diseased minds," are "still running loose."

It Sells. Europe's anti-leftists have their own theories about a plot. They find support in another book, *The Red*

Roses of Dallas,* published in France by a correspondent for European publications, Nerin Gun, who covered the assassination. Newsman Gun hints strongly that it is possible that Oswald killed Kennedy out of admiration for Castro—a theory that still lingers in the minds of some U.S. Government officials who cannot fully shake off the suspicion that Oswald was acting for Castro.

The average European by no means swallows every far-out theory, but their own intrigue-steeped national histories make it easy for millions to doubt that Oswald did it alone. In Italy, where Julius Caesar got his and where Machiavelli elevated plotting to respectability, the only question is when the conspirators will be unmasked. Among Frenchmen, who have long had a pen-

* Named for the bouquet Jackie Kennedy carried in the fatal Dallas parade.

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